Numb. 83.

THE OBSERVATOR.

Of the Exceſſive Price of Coals. Reaſons for paſſing the Bill for the Encouragement of Navigation. *The Evil Practices of the* Lighter-men. *The Means to prevent the Same. A Propoſal for* Greenwich *Hoſpital. Van* Hump's *Preferment and Juſtice. Of the Cheat of* Sygills *and pretended* Conjurers.

From Wednesday February the 3d, to Saturday February the 6th, 170$\frac{2}{3}$.

Country-m. MAſter *Obſervator*, The People of *London* were very well Pleaſed with your Diſcourſe concerning the *Exceſſive Price of Coals*, which ſtill continues: Pray, Sir, What do you think of that Affair? Are the Poor to be *Starv'd* for the future, by want of Firing?

Obſ. Indeed, Honeſt *Country-man*, I am in great hopes they will not, for there is a very reaſonable Bill now before the *Houſe of Commons*, for the *Encouragement of Navigation*, relating to the Coal-Trade, and preventing the Abuſes therein, by providing ſufficient Convoys for that Trade. I am not unacquainted with the Methods uſed to obſtruct this Uſeful Bill, nor with the Perſons whoſe Intereſt it is to Deſtroy it; but the Wiſdom of our Repreſentatives is ſuch, and their Affection to the Poor is ſo great, that it is not doubted but the Bill will paſs to the great Encouragement of Navigation, and the Relief of the Poor of this Kingdom; which two Reaſons, I think, are ſufficient for the paſſing of this Bill.

That Navigation hereby will be Encouraged, is evident, from the Diſ-couragement it lay under the laſt Year, the Colliers for the Generality making but three or four Voyages in a Seaſon. It is well known the *Colliery* and *Fiſhery* (if improved) are the two great Nurſeries of Seamen for the Navy of *England*, without whom our Nation is Inſecure, and we lie open to the Inſults of our Enemies. The appointing Convoys for the Colliers, is not only an Encouragement to Navigation in reſpect to the Coal-Trade; but alſo to the Coaſters, who Trade to the Northward from *London*; and not only to theſe, but to the Merchants-Ships which Trade to the *Baltick*, the *Sound*, and other places farther North; who, when they come on the *Engliſh*-Coaſt, are very likely to be ſecured by theſe Convoys from the *Dunkirk* Privateers, which generally take their Courſe Northward to get their Purchaſe.

Beſides the *National Advantage* in the increaſe of Seamen: This Bill will be a great Encouragement to the Owners of Ships, ſince the Colliers hereby will be enabled to make twelve or thirteen Voyages in a Year, and which by the Wear and Tear of their Shipping, will yet be an Encouragement to Ship-Wrights, and others concerned in the fitting out of Ships.

For want of a Bill of this Nature, the Coals laſt Year advanced to Forty Shillings *per* Chaldron; which advance (by common Computation of Coals imported, at the *Meters-Office*, being about Four Hundred Thouſand Chaldrons Yearly) amounts to upwards of Three Hundred Thouſand Pounds *per Ann.* Detriment to the Citizens of *London*, and the Suburbane Inhabitants. This advanced Sum is, in effect, a Tax upon theſe People, tho' not Levied upon them in the Form and Manner of a Publick Aid. And this Omiſſion in former Parliaments can be eſteemed no other than a Tax, ſince according to the Axiom, *Qui non prohibet Malum, quod poteſt facit*: Now ſuppoſe all the Towns Corporate, and Villages in *England*, lay under the Circumſtances in this Reſpect with the City of *London*, what a National Detriment would it appear to be, eſpecially if Coals ſhould riſe to three or four Pounds *per* Chaldron, to which Price (for want of this Act) in all probability they will ariſe in another Winter.

The Freedom of the Market of *Billingſgate* ſeems now Conſtrain'd by a ſmall Number of *Lighter-men*, whoſe proper Buſineſs is to carry Coals by Water, as *Carmen* do Merchants Goods by Land; but now they are the Chief Buyers of Coals at the Keys, and by Hoarding of them up, they raiſe the Price in Summer to ſuch as are capable of laying up their Stores for their Private Uſes, and by which means the Neceſſitous Poor are Miſerably wrackt in the Winter.

To prevent the Extravagant Price of Coals, it is Humbly conceived, That a proper Means to effect it, would be, To oblige the *Lighter-men* upon Loading of all Coals, to inſert the Names of the Retailers in the *Meters* Bills, ſo that it may be entred in the *Meters-Office*, to which the Conſumers and Retailers may have Recourſe, and be thereby certify'd of the quantities and ſorts of Coals they Buy.

And whereas it has been the Practice of the *Fitters* at *New-Caſtle*, often to mix the Beſt and Worſt ſorts of Coals in one Ship, which are Sold for the Beſt ſort only. If all the Maſters of Coal-ſhips were obliged to produce in their Bills of Lading, the Number of Keels of ſuch ſeveral ſorts as are put on Board their Ships, the Buyer would know the Goodneſs of the Commodity they Buy; and the Abuſe hereof to the Publick would be prevented. It would be worthy Enquiry, to know what Contracts the *New Caſtle Fitters* have made with the *Lighter-men* of *London*, when they came to Town, not long before *Chriſtmas* laſt.

Country-m. Truly, Maſter *Obſervator*, 'Tis well for the Poor of *London*, That the Parliament has taken Notice of this grand Abuſe, and that we have ſo many Members of the Honourable *Houſe of Commons*, that are alſo in High Poſts in the *Navy*, who in both reſpects can do no other than Encourage the Navigation of this Kingdom.

Obſ. When I have heard ſome People ſpeak againſt

againſt this Bill in Publick *Coffee-Houſes*; without Breach of Charity, I have eſteem'd them to be in a *French* Intereſt, and the avow'd Enemies of the Government; for who but ſuch would oppoſe a Bill, ſo wiſely contrived for the *Support* and *Strengthening* the Royal Navy by a Breed of Seamen, without which our Ships of War are but Floating Caſtles Un-man'd, and by the paſſing of which Bill, the Poor will meet with ſo neceſſary a Relief. But we cannot leave this Affair in better Hands than where it lies.

Country-m. I thought it had been in the Power of the Magiſtracy of the City of *London* to have kept their Freemen within the Bounds of their particular Callings.

Obſ. It is ſo far in the Power of the Lord Mayor of that Honourable City, as to prevent all fore-Stalling of Markets, and Monopolizing of any ſort of Commodity; and I much Queſtion whether the Practice of the *Lighter-men*, in making Contracts with Coal-Owners at *New-Caſtle*, and in Hoarding up Coals in *London*, in order to advance the Price, be not a Monopoly in Law; Confederacies among Particular Perſons engaged in Trade, are as dangerous to the Publick, as Confederacies againſt a Government; ſince by ſuch a Confederacy, thoſe People are weakned, who ſhould ſupport it. The Combination of the *Wharfingers* at the *Cuſtom-Houſe-Keys* may be an Inſtance; from which Foot aroſe another Combination among the *Land-waiters*, which was yet more prejudicial to the Publick. Confederacies of this Nature have always been oppoſed by the Wiſeſt Governments, as being the Inlets to greater Miſchiefs.

The *Lighter-men* of the City of *London*, are as Wealthy as any one Body of Men of like Bulk in Trade; and yet do they not that Service to the Publick in paying Duties as do other Sea-faring Men: Every Sailor in the *Engliſh* Navy, as alſo in Merchants Service, Pays *6 d. per Menſum* out of his Wages towards the ſupport of *Greenwich-Hoſpital*. But ſuch as Ply in *Lighters*, *Barges*, *Oars*, *Skullers*, *Luggage-Boats*, *Peter-Boats*, and *Keels*, Pay nothing on this Account, who ought to pay double; ſince they are exempted from the Wars; and get the better Buſineſs by the others Abſence from the River. Now if the *Lighters*, *Barges*, and *Keels*, were Taxed according to Tonnage, and the Leſſer plying Boats according to the Men that work them; it would raiſe a conſiderable Sum, which very thing I propoſed the laſt Seſſion of Parliament, for the Benefit of *Greenwich-Hoſpital*.

Country-m. I wiſh it had taken effect for the Good of our Poor Sailors.

Obſ. Truly, Sir, There were many Noble Lords, and Honeſt Gentlemen mentioned in the Act for *Greenwich-Hoſpital*, but the Management thereof was perform'd by very few of them. I ſuppoſe, the others ſaw good reaſon for being Abſent. The Promotion of Officers for that Charity was very unnatural, in Regard that they had never ſerv'd in the Navy; and conſequently, not being apprized of the Sufferings of the Sailors, could not lay before the Commiſſioners Propoſals for their Speedy Relief: Inſtead of Building a Sumptuous Hall, and other unneceſſary Adornments for that Hoſpital. If out of the Charity Money Levied for that Purpoſe, Wards had been Built at *Rocheſter*, *Plymouth*, the *Iſle of White*, and other Places neceſſary for the Reception of Sick and Wounded Sailors, in the Nature of the Barracks Built at *Portſmouth* for the Land Soldiers; the Sailors would have met with a ſpeedy Relief. The want of which muſt reaſonably be attributed to the employing of Land-men, as Officers in *Greenwich-Hoſpital*, who if they have not a Natural Averſion to the Welfare of the Sailors, they are unacquainted with Methods Neceſſary to their Relief.

As my Lord *Van Hump* is the Meſſengers *Croſs-Bow* in the Treaſury Chambers, he can be no other than the Sailors *Blunderbuſs* in *Greenwich-Hoſpital*. I hope it was not his Juſtice to the Meſſengers recommended to two other Places, the one in the *Hoſpital*, and the other in the *Regiſter-Office*. There is a certain Fatality attends the Offices wherein *Van Hump* is concerned: His Practice at the Treaſury, is the ſame in the other Offices wherein he is concerned: *Juſtice* is a thing contrary to his Nature; and it is not to be expected in any Office wherein he is concerned. It is not long ago, a certain very Honeſt Gentleman (who has deſerved better of his Country, than 100 *Van Humps*) came into a certain Office to enquire when he ſhould be Paid for the laſt Charge of King *William* of Glorious Memory to this Government; *Van Hump* ask'd him, Whether he expected any *Juſtice* in that Office? The Gentleman told him *Yes*; which ſo provok'd his Lordſhip, that he took up a Fire-fork, or Poker, and ſtrook the Gentleman therewith, this was within the Verge of the Court, and if my Lord *Van Hump*, has not as good Intereſt at the Board of Green-Cloth, as he has in other Places, he may be call'd to an Account for it.

Country-m. Sir, I had my Garden Rob'd laſt Week of ſeveral Cabbages, and my Henrooſt of ſeveral Cocks and Hens. A Friend of mine at *London*, told me of a certain Conjurer, who ſells a thing call'd a *Sygil*, which will keep Rogues, Thieves, and any thing elſe off my Ground.

Obſ. I have heard of that Wizzard, tho' he's no more a Conjurer than your ſelf. There has been a great Conteſt and Suit betwixt him and Almanack-*John*, the Conjurer in the *Strand*. It ſeems one got more Practice in the *Magick-Art*, than the other; they are both of 'em highly Learn'd, both *Garretteers*, one a *Taylor*, and t'other a *Shoomaker*; *John* is very famous for Calculating Nativities: He told us laſt *March* of the Death of a great Man, and King *William* Dying that Month, *John* ſaid he meant Him, tho' at the latter-end of the Year, he Pray'd for King *William*'s Health. Pray, honeſt *Country-man*, Have a care of theſe Fellows, they are the worſt ſort of *Pick-Pockets* in the Univerſe; and ought to be whip'd out of a Chriſtian Country. They are no more acquainted with the Stars, than thou art with the Man in the Moon; and if it were not for Fools, theſe Knaves would Starve.

Advertiſment.

England's Corruptions and Miſmanagements Diſcovered. In a Dialogue between *Trueman* and *Legion*. Setting forth the Vitious and Corrupt Practices of thoſe who endeavour to Enſlave and Ruine this Nation, and Publickly Exclaim againſt ſuch worthy Patriots of the *Houſe of Commons*, and others, who endeavour to Preſerve the ſame. *Price Six Pence.*

Sold by *J. How*, in the *Ram-Head-Inn-Yard* in *Fenchurch-ſtreet*.

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